No Regrets

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No Regrets

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Inspired by this amazing art by Reapersun.

There were several things Will Graham couldn't regret, though sometimes he was sure he should. It was something he was conscious of considering the amount of coverups he'd inked for people who had regretted their tattoo choices of years past. He definitely couldn't regret buying this little shop, despite how much he really hated his damn neighbour - art and antique dealer (and unverified Count), Hannibal Lecter.

My other home is Twitter

Notes

I fell in love with the art when it was posted it privately a few months back and I really wanted to write something for it, but have only now kicked my butt in gear. For someone with enough tattoos and a love of tropes I am appalled that I have never written a Tattoo Shop AU before. So massive thanks to Reapersun for the inspiration!

There were several things Will Graham couldn't regret, though sometimes he was sure he should. It was something he was conscious of considering the amount of coverups he'd inked for people who had regretted their tattoo choices of years past.

He couldn't regret kissing Rachel Godfrey after the Spring formal in Junior High. Could really never regret kissing her brother John three years later during a thunderstorm as they hid under the bike shed. Both those instances came with their own trouble and consequences, but they also taught him a lot too - about who he was and about having the strength to be that person.

He could never regret giving up his place at the police academy to look after his dad. Sure the guy was a bitter asshole, who only got worse as the cancer ate away at him, but he was Will's only family. Life took him in so many bad directions during that time, but one good thing came out of it - meeting people who helped pull him back together when his dad died. Giving him friendship and support and a vocation. Meeting Jack Crawford and, eventually, becoming his apprentice. He couldn't regret that decision to stay with his dad, because everything that resulted from it had made him the man he was today.

He couldn't regret buying this little shop.

It was tiny, all he could afford with the money he'd saved over the years. Enough room for two artists to have a good sized station each. There was only one drawing area and the reception was just a little table with two chairs for waiting customers. But, it was coming together okay, and he couldn't regret it despite how hard it had been getting to this point. And how hard it would continue to be - considering running a business wasn't exactly a piece of cake. But Jack had retired and he didn't want to work for anyone other than his mentor. So he'd decided to strike out on his own, no one to answer to and only his best friend, and also one of Jack's previous apprentices - Bev Katz - as an employee. Which she was still laughing about, though she hadn't turned down the job and insisted on calling him "boss" in a rather annoying way.

No, he couldn't regret anything that had brought him to this moment, despite how much he really hated his damn neighbour.

The proprietor of the art and antiques store across the strip from Will's tattoo parlour, was a stuck up asshole, who Bev insisted was an actual Count. Though knowing Bev that was likely bullshit. He could almost believe it though - the guy was practically choking on that silver spoon.

Their shops were directly opposite each other across the small pedestrianised street in this upmarket end of town - boutiques and luxury items abound. Will knew that they might get a few neighbours unhappy to accept a tattoo parlour into the area, but it was especially annoying that one of them was able to scowl in at them all day from the comfort of his own shop front.

It had all started when Will had bought, what had once been, a small barbershop. He'd got it for a steal because it had been run down before having been closed up for almost two years. It

had only been sold because the elderly owner had passed. Despite the work that needed doing, it was already pretty perfect - with appropriate plumbing and good layout, even if it did need some work. After two months he was able to open.

But in the month before it opened, he had received a note through the door inviting the proprietor to the local business owners meeting.

And that was when he met the art and antique dealer (and unverified Count), Hannibal Lecter.

Pompous ass was Will's first thought on seeing the overdressed toff at the meet and greet. Like a busy body, Lecter had been the first to introduce himself, gushing over having finally someone in the store opposite his own as it had become quite the eyesore. When he'd asked after the store content, and Will had answered that it was a parlour for two tattoo artists - the man's face had dropped. He was at a loss for words and then finally, with a somewhat distant look, he replied in his cold, European accent -

"Yes. I suppose some do consider that *art*."

Maybe it was the fact that Will was no stranger to people's attitudes towards him and tattoos in general, but the attitude wasn't a shock to him. Even so, it did stiffen his resolve - he was determined to make a go of this business no matter what, and certainly no matter who. And certainly no matter Hannibal pompous ass Lecter!

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"He's staring at you again." Bev taunted as she turned over the sign on the front door.

He wasn't even sure why they had the sign. She turned it over every morning to show they were open - but as many days they both worked late into the night, he often wasn't sure why he turned it to closed. He was grateful - business had been booming. It wasn't like there were so many tattoo parlours in this part of town. And it seemed the busier they got, the more Hannibal Lecter glared at them from his own shop.

"He's not staring at me, Bev. He's glaring. Specifically at the success of the shop." Will snipped, ignoring Bev's grin as she turned to him. "Specifically trying to suck the joy out of people appreciating a form of art that can't be sold in his stuffy shop. He'll be over to commence snooping any moment."

"Damn Graham. When I first met you I was really struck by how intuitive you were. How well you could read people and just… Your imagination is so huge and you're a great artist and when you add all that together… we pretty much all owe you awe. You can give people the tattoos they have in their hearts. If we weren't friends I think I'd hate you a little. No… I do hate you a little. But, boy are you so dumb sometimes it hurts."

She seemed a mixture of amused and annoyed.

"What?" He asked, confused, as she turned her back on him and went to ready her station.

And then she just pointed at the door without looking up. It opened and there was Hannibal Lecter with a tray holding three ornate cups filled with the best coffee Will had ever tasted in his life, not that he would ever admit that.

“Good morning.” Lecter smiled.

Will wasn’t sure how this had started. A few weeks earlier Lecter’s early morning waves had turned into him bringing over coffee. Only a couple of weeks before then his waves had been only glares. He still glared, as much as Bev protested that wasn’t the case. She always wanted to see the nice in people, but Will knew what was going on. The busy body had decided to snoop - come over every few days with coffee and the guise of friendship and check in on them. No doubt making sure they weren’t causing the sort of trouble he was expecting them to, attracting the wrong kind of clientele to the area. He probably thought they were dealing drugs out of the back too!

Will grunted his greeting and went to his setting up his station.

“Hi Hannibal.” Bev chirped happily and walked straight over to relieve him of one of his cups. “Mmm, great coffee. As always.” She picked up the second one and passed it to Will.

He didn’t look up but took it and sipped, savouring the amazing coffee and muttering quiet thanks that Lecter probably didn’t hear as he replied -

“Always a pleasure Ms Katz.”

Will could just imagine the guy’s disingenuous smile. And… that was kind of a real shame, because the couple of times Will had glanced over the narrow street separating them and seen Lecter smiling at customers… it was kinda beautiful. It was clear that Lecter got joy from sharing his love of beautiful art with people. Will hated to admit that in a roundabout way, they had that in common. Though clearly Lecter’s ideas differed from Will’s on what could be considered art.

Will tuned back into Bev and Lecter’s conversation when his ears pricked up at the mention of his name.

“Huh?” Will said, finally looking up. He kept his curls long on top so he had to flick his head back to tossle them out of his eyes - the action causing him to end looking directly at Lecter. Who was looking *very* directly back at him. He looked damn hungry and Will found himself wondering when was the last time the man got laid. Maybe that was just how Europeans were? Like the British always looked constipated - maybe Lithuanians always looked a little horny?

He blinked at his own thoughts (not least trying to work out when he had picked up the fact that Lecter was apparently from Lithuania) and then managed - “What are you talking about Bev?”

“The Vitruvian Man - the one I inked on your arm.”

“Yeah.” Will smiled and looked down at it, moving his arm to present the tattoo on his forearm to them both. Bev had done a lot of his work, as he had done hers, and was particularly proud of them. “You did a great job.”

“Well, of course.” Bev replied dismissively but with good humour. “But I was talking more about your tastes.”

“I was… explaining how I recently sold an antique copy of-” Lecter started, seeming a little flustered for some reason, his eyes darting from Will and back to the coffee he was holding. Bev cut him off anyway -

“*I* was saying that you both have great taste in art. Show him the Norman Chapel!” Bev pointed her finger at him and Will reeled back slightly.

“I’m wearing a vest Bev, I’m sure the guy can see it well enough if he wants to.” Will didn’t bother to turn so that Lecter could get a better look at the tattoo on his left upper arm.

Will had no idea what Bev was up to but he didn’t like her tone. Or that glint in her eyes.

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A month later, the coffee was accompanied by home-made pastries.

Bev had taken to greeting Lecter even more cheerily and chattering away as she ate and drank, and returned his crockery.

Will found himself tuning in to their conversations more often, and even joining in himself. He was having to remind himself more and more that this guy was just a local busy body, not a fellow business owner making friends.

That said, Lecter was actually pretty interesting. As much as Will hated to admit it.

He *was* a Count, as Bev had said. But he didn’t grow up rich, he grew up in an orphanage until he was claimed by his uncle and raised in Paris. Well, it was still a far cry from Louisiana, and yet, Will found himself sympathetic. His mum had passed when he was a kid and as shit as his dad was, he couldn’t begin to imagine what it would be like to lose both parents so young.

A couple of weeks after Lecter started bringing pastries, the familiar and comforting smell of Louisiana entered the parlour with him.

“Holy shit! Beignets? I haven’t had these in years!” Will didn’t miss how Lecter beamed at his words as, for the first time, Will was the one to greet him. He took the plate of sugary goodness and smiled so wide his cheeks hurt. His aunt used to make these when he was in need of comfort food, and an escape from his dad - he might have mentioned that in passing at some point.

“Uh, Will you have a little…” Bev was grinning as she indicated the sugar that was all over his face with the first unhesitating bite.

“Sorry. That was rude.” Will apologised to Lecter with his mouth full and received a rather disarming smile in return.

“No need to apologise. I enjoy cooking in part for the pleasure of seeing others enjoy the cooking too. Perhaps-”

“Damn these are good.” Will said, taking a second before finishing his first, and setting them carefully on some paper he had set out on his station.

There was some polite conversation then about Louisiana and the recipe, which to Will seemed slightly flustered, and when Lecter left with his little tray, Bev turned and glared at him.

“What!?” Will managed around another mouthful of his third beignet.

“Will! For someone who has so much damn empathy and intuition when it comes to customers… urgh!” She shrugged in exasperation.

“What?!” Will replied with equal exasperation. “What did I do?”

“It’s what you’re not doing! Can’t you see, Hannibal really likes you. You mention one time in passing that you grew up in Louisiana and the next thing you know he’s making you treats from your home-state?”

“Bev.” Will scoffed. “Hannibal Lecter is a busy body. He took one look at me at the business owner’s thing and made a judgement. He constantly comes over here to snoop, probably wanting to check we aren’t lowering the class of the neighbourhood. And most likelt just giving himself the jollies as he looks down on our ‘art’” - he used his fingers to make speech marks in the air.

“Damn, Will, how are you this oblivious?” She was mad now, madder than he’d really ever seen her - at him at least. “Have you listened to a damn word the man has ever said?”

Will shrugged. “I’m busy, I focus on setting up. I don’t always tune in. I try to be the only person my head at any given time if I can help it.” He snapped, but even so, found he was suddenly feeling really bad about it. She had a way of giving him the guilts.

“Almost the first damn time he came here he gave this whole speech on how tattoos as an art form are fascinating and that he wished they had covered it in some of the art history classes he’d taken. And that meeting you at the meeting had piqued his interest. That we are such a great asset to the neighbourhood - some new and modern life. That he is impressed with the quality of our work and... Damn! Will Graham that man has been over here trying to ignite any little interest from you for weeks and you’ve not even noticed! He’s a nice guy, and this is getting painful to watch. And don’t tell me you don’t find him interesting because I-”

Will held up hands to placate her. “Woah, woah, Bev. Honestly? I think you are just reading something into all this, so the guy like to make pastries and brings us coffee. If you say he isn’t snooping, fine. But maybe that’s just him being neighbourly?”

Bev let out a high pitched shriek of frustration and stomped out of the shop muttering something about being back later.

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For the next couple of weeks Will avoided Lecter's visits - restocking inks, restocking tissue paper, restocking needles. Anything he could do to be coming and going from the stockroom and having no time to stop and drink coffee. He knew it was rude but he wasn't good with people - it had taken him years to even like Katz. He was a loner and he thought too much and he didn't like to have other people's voices in his head - which happened all too easily.

Regardless, Hannibal Lecter was on his mind much of the time. What Bev had said had given him pause for thought. What if she was right?

The man was attractive - stunning features that could have been carved by the gods, and whilst his sense of style was… interesting, he always wore a suit well. And Will had noticed that they were always perfectly cut around his ass. Bev was at least right that Will *did* find him interesting. The snippets of his life Will had overheard made him ever more intrigued by the bits in between. Will wasn't made of stone! In fact, that one time Lecter had come over on a fairly warm morning, his tie loosened and top button undone… Well, Will could stand to see more of that.

But, it seemed pointless now. Especially if he actually was interested in Will. He'd ignored the man, been rude to him, and possibly spurned his possible advances. Will had never been good where these sorts of things were concerned, and his habit was to fall back into just ignoring the problem and never seeing the person again.

Which was hard when he kept bringing over coffee.

The morning that Bev had an appointment and left him to open up alone, despite everything Bev had said, he was still surprised to see Lecter, who he now considered 'Bev's friend'. Maybe she hadn't mentioned she wouldn't be around for the coffee?

"Oh. Uh, hi Mr Lecter." Will mumbled. "Bev isn't in until later."

Lecter frowned and looked down, which was when Will clocked that he only had two coffee cups on his tray instead of three. "I… I know, she told me yesterday. She assured me you would still appreciate my company but-"

"No, no that's cool. Um, you make great coffee." Will winced, more than a little unsettled at having no choice but to deal with the man. "I mean, come sit down… yeah, um. Sorry, I'm not great with… entertaining." Will wasn't sure why he was suddenly feeling so flustered, only that it reminded him of waking all sweaty and breathless from wet dreams as a teenager.

Lecter smiled and held out the cup, which Will took with a smile of his own.

"So… Small talk." Will shrugged with a growing grin as Lecter continued to smile beautifully at him - "I'm not good at it."

“I think you’ve contributed more to our little chats than you realise.” Lecter smiled gently. “Oh, and it’s Doctor Lecter, but please - call me Hannibal.”

Of course Hannibal Lecter would correct him that he was a doctor. Pompous ass! And yet… Will found himself still smiling as he thought that.

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Will fidgeted.

He’d been feeling sort of off kilter since that morning that Bev had been out. How easy it had been to talk, how interesting Lecter was - Doctor Hannibal! Maybe Bev had been right because something odd had happened.

Hannibal had stopped coming by in the mornings. Instead it was like he waited for Bev to go out to grab her sandwich and then would bring over lunch for himself and Will. Sometimes Will would be busy but Hannibal would sit there and watch him work - chat easily with the client, and praise the design, execution and the customer’s taste. Sometimes he was so charming it was almost flirtatious and Will liked it. He liked to be on the receiving end of that kind of attention from Hannibal. It made him feel all tingly, and the guy really could cook.

Today had been no exception and when Hannibal left after his lunch, Will felt… bereft at the thought of not seeing him until the following day. They had become increasingly close, bonding over childhood stories of making do, and a shared interest in art in one form or another. They even discovered they both shared a bizarre and slightly morbid hobby of reading true crime cases, and a weirdly matching sense of humour along those lines. Will put his interest down to having wanted to be a cop - a detective. Hannibal had said his interest came from a previous career in Psychiatry which had lead to some work with the criminally insane. In short, there was very rarely a dull moment now that Will actually interacted with the man.

And so Will was stood outside Hannibal’s shop, not long before closing. He had never been over before, and had kept the early evening free of appointments just to do so. He was resolved. He was going to ask Hannibal out on a date.

Which, in some ways seemed redundant, given that they now ate lunch together almost every day. But okay, even if Hannibal wasn’t a snooping busy body, he could just be being friendly. But, this had to be make or break, because lunch wasn’t cutting it anymore and it was getting too distracting having Hannibal sit there if he was inking someone, because his ability to focus wavered and all he wanted to do was stare at Hannibal’s mouth.

He only realised he’d been standing there for a few minutes when Hannibal appeared at the door to turn over his sign to Closed. When he saw Will, those very lips blossomed into the most beautiful smile that Will felt from his chest to his groin.

Hannibal Lecter was not his type. His type were rough and ready, usually tattooists, sometimes bikers, often in bands - the kind of guys he happened to meet in his line of work. It was always passionate and always burned out. He would never in a million years looked at

Hannibal Lecter and his amazing suits and his own art and antiques store and think - that's the guy for me. And yet, now he couldn't imagine a day without seeing him.

"Fuck." Will muttered, his palms sweaty with the realisation of quite how deep his feelings were.

Hannibal opened the door and welcomed him in with a flourish. "Will, what a pleasure to see you here."

"Hey, I just… I wanted to ask you something."

"Come in." Hannibal was still beaming. "Go on out back."

Will smiled, looking all around him as he walked through the store to the private area. He let out a low whistle before taking a seat on the ornate couch Hannibal had gestured towards once he'd locked the door.

"My private collection." Hannibal informed him. "Things I cannot bear to sell on."

"Wow, everything in here looks pricey. Feels inappropriate for a guy like me to be near this stuff." He was glad that he was at least sitting and hopefully less likely to break something that way.

"Nonsense, Will, you fit right in." Hannibal's voice was low, the words purred out.

"Hah, because I have the Vitruvian Man on my forearm? Very funny."

"No. Because you are… of immeasurable value. To me."

Will stopped looking around and focused on Hannibal, his eyes soft and hungry at once, Will supposed they might be mirroring his own.

After a beat too long of Will not responding, Hannibal cleared his throat and looked away. "I… I must admit I've stopped short of asking before, but I am intrigued… I would like to see, that is, if it wouldn't be too forward. I would like to see your tattoos sometime… all of them. Purely an academic curiosity of course!"

A small smile quirked Will's lips and he could feel the electricity snap between them.

"Well, I guess I should admit I came here to ask you on a date but…" He swallowed, not quite believing he was going to do this, and then pulled his t-shirt over his head. He held it tight, almost nervously in his lap as Hannibal's eyes swept over him.

Hannibal was next to him in an instant, kneeling to the side of the couch as he took Will's hand in his. He turned his arm over, studying the Vitruvian Man before laying a kiss on the man's forehead - Will's arm. He continued lacing kisses up Will's arm, studying each tattoo before admiring it closely with his lips.

Will bit his own lower lip and trembled. He hadn't come here for this, hadn't expected things to move so fast and yet… Was it fast? Maybe they had been tip-toeing around this for

months. He only knew that he wanted this and didn't want it to stop. Didn't want Hannibal to stop.

Every inch of his skin shivered as Hannibal's lips trailed to his shoulder and then his neck, finally capturing Will's mouth in a kiss that consumed them both.

Maybe they could go on a date another night. For now he was just happy that Hannibal had turned the sign and locked the door. His only regret was that it had taken him so long to kiss Hannibal Lecter.

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